

Marist ECHO

Institute of the Marist Brothers

Number 41 – Year 15 – September 2002

NEW WINESKINS

It's been a year since the 20th General Chapter opened in Rome. Its determination to choose life has resounded loud and clear. A brief document, filled with suggestions and guidelines, it serves as a roadmap for living our charism. Marist life is bubbling over in many places, and fitting containers are needed to take it all in. As Jesus said, "People pour new wine into fresh wineskins." (Mt 9, 17) If the Chapter's guidelines are not accompanied by attempts to be innovative, they'll amount to nothing more than wishful thinking. It's a question of linking memory and prophecy together. Memory has a high regard for history but does not let itself be shackled by it. Prophecy means taking a good hard look at what the future holds, not hurtling into the unknown. Paradoxically, memory makes no sense if it is not at the service of prophecy, and all prophecy grows from the roots of memory. We Brothers and Lay Marists know that fidelity to Marcellin's charism demands searching for new wineskins, paying attention to the new generations of children and young people, deciphering their encoded language to bring Jesus' message within their grasp... without getting hung up on things that we've depended upon until now. We are not custodians of museums, we are people who proclaim life.

The practice of the Presence of God

Br. Seán Sammon, Superior General

Have a conversation with a child, and you'll learn something important about listening to God. The language of most youngsters is plain spoken and unvarnished. But, it's not so much what children say that helps us connect with the Almighty, rather it is the way in which they go about engaging you and me. Children are notoriously patient with us, just like God. For example, most sense that we don't always listen well, and so, like good teachers, most provide the necessary remediation by telling us the same story over and over again. Some require that we do the same, and surprise us endlessly by reacting to each telling of the tale as though they were hearing it for the very first time. Why, they even stop to laugh uproariously at all our old and familiar funny lines along the way.



Brother Seán speaks to the community at the General House. In the background, a close-up of Michelangelo's Creation



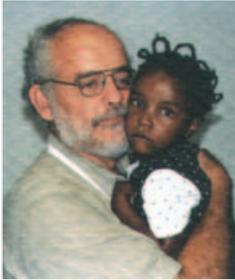
The innocence of children brings us closer to God

God speaks to us a lot. But we most often fail to listen, preferring, instead, not only the sound of our own voice to God's but our solutions too!

So, what is there to do? Jesus put it this way: Be like little children, and come unto God. Today we might just add: Yes, but let's do so quietly! And in so doing, we may very well be blessed by hearing some "Good News."

Marcellin was so at home among the children; he knew somehow that they would teach him to listen well. And his expression for the fruit of all his lessons? Simply: the practice of the presence of God. ♦

V I L L A G E M A R C E L L I N

*Dreams can come true in Zimbabwe**St. Marcellin's Children's Village - Carlo Spagnoli*

Carlo is 50 years old, a graduate of San Leone Magno, our Marist High School in Rome. After completing medical studies, he decided to carry out his life's mission in Africa – in Uganda, Kenya, and Cameroon. He married Angelina, a Ugandan, and they have three children. In Harare, Zimbabwe he came across the Brothers once

more and continues to keep in contact with them. In addition to being on the staff of the local diocesan hospital, he has opened a center to house and care for orphaned children and teenagers – left to fend for themselves, some abused, many dying from AIDS. The center consists of cabins with room for 8 or 9, including an adult who acts as a parent and lives with the children. Following the canonization of Marcellin, Carlo named the village in the Saint's honor. Many friends have joined together to provide this inspiring work with spiritual and financial support.

Dearest friends:

Saturday, May 4th will live in our hearts forever, the day we entrusted our Village for orphans to Mary's love-filled care and that of her faithful follower, St. Marcellin Champagnat. As planned, we gathered in the Village at 11:30. Everyone brought food and drink for the com-



Twins... signs of love and hope



St. Marcellin's Children's Village

munity celebration, and especially their time, talents, and readiness to make this a joyful day. There were more than 50 of us in the Village, but really hundreds more than that because we know you were with us in spirit. We remembered all of you before, during, and after the Mass celebrated by our parish priest, Father Martin, an Irish Carmelite. We and you were truly one in the Lord's love. It was an unforgettable day. We felt bonded together in our life and work here. There were whites, blacks and colored; women, men, and children; priests, brothers, sisters, and so many lay people; Catholics and Protestants; students, professionals, nurses, workers, administrators. It goes without saying that the Marist Brothers were with us, six of them, led by their Provincial, Brother Jude.

After Mass, Father Martin blessed the Village, and following that, refreshments were served. Blue skies and cool spring temperatures accompanied us the whole day long. People started heading home around 3 o'clock, their hearts filled with joy.

St. Marcellin Village is conveniently located just 3 kilometers from the airport in Harare. It is becoming an important center and home for so many abandoned youths, orphans, almost all of them suffering from AIDS. With increased funding, we will be able to take care of up to 100 children. We sense St. Marcellin's closeness to us in these tough yet exciting times, and we feel that he is looking after us and giving us strength to do all the good that we possibly can.

Hugs from our family. Love,

Carlo, Angelina and children

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Witnessing to the preeminence of God

Brother Antonio Ramalho, interviewed by Brother Lluís Serra

Br. Antonio Ramalho, 55, was born in Maceió, Brazil. He holds graduate degrees in Philosophy from Pernambuco and Theology from Louvain, Belgium. An educator, formator, and Provincial of Brazil North for 12 years, he is now a General Councillor, in charge of the Religious Life Commission.



Brother Antonio Ramalho during a break at the General Chapter

IS THE LIFE OF A BROTHER RELEVANT IN TODAY'S WORLD?

Giving witness to God's preeminence, consecrating one's life to God with a hope born of faith and rooted in a gratuitous and universal love – being a disciple of Christ – is always relevant.

WOULDN'T YOU HAVE TO REINVENT THE RELIGIOUS LIFE TO MAKE IT UNDERSTANDABLE IN TODAY'S WORLD?

We should make a great effort to understand today's world, its cultures, and especially its young people. We need to spice up our religious life with new seasoning, put more zip into the Gospel life we bring to others, make that life more appealing. That is what re-founding is all about.

WHAT PART DOES FORMATION PLAY IN THIS TASK?

Formation has the task of nourishing the future, by encouraging young people to explore new avenues concerning the genuineness of our charism, starting from an identity which

should be taken for granted, loved and accepted.

WHAT PRIORITIES WOULD YOUR COMMISSION HOPE TO ADDRESS?

In order to address the priorities of the 20° General Chapter, the Commission for Religious Life would assist the Provinces to vitalise our consecration, our spirituality and the community life of the Brothers. With support from an International Commission on Formation we hope to stimulate initial and permanent formation particularly, on a regional scale, the preparation of formators and community animators, greater cooperation among the formation teams and a greater openness to cultural diversity.

DO YOU SEE MARIST LIFE CONTINUING TO ATTRACT YOUNG PEOPLE?

Jesus Christ and Marcellin Champagnat continue to attract the young. The Marist charism remains highly relevant today. The important thing is to know whether or not our Brothers and communities are giving concrete evidence of a coherent lifestyle, one that attracts young people, too, and promises to provide them with meaning in their lives.

WHAT DOES THE FACT THAT WE LIVE IN COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

In a world so compartmentalized and dissimilar, marked by a variety of fanatical movements, life in

community, centered on the Gospel, can bear witness to a fraternity without borders, one without discrimination or prejudice, a place of welcome and communion, where the bread and wine of solidarity and celebration are joyfully distributed.

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN LAY PEOPLE SHARE IN OUR MARIST RELIGIOUS LIFE?

The reassessment of the role of lay people in the Church is being accompanied by their more dynamic and interactive participation in the spirituality and mission of various religious families. Starting from our baptismal consecration, we, Brothers and Lay Marists, traveling side by side and engaged in mutual dialog, will be better able to deepen the identity of our respective vocations in the Church, inspired by a charism that is a gift from God and the heritage of that very same Church. ♦

Antonio heads the Religious Life Commission



• HOW BEAUTIFUL IT IS

THE RENEWAL OF

*The second call discerned by the 20th General Chapter is this:
“To revitalize our communities so that they might be places of
brotherhood, simplicity and Gospel life in service of our mission.”*

*The strength of the Marist project, founded by St. Marcellin
Champagnat, brings about the overcoming of individualism and our
dissipated energy in order to experience unity through diversity and
serve the world in more effective ways. As Brothers and Lay People,
we are called to be the bearers of joy and fraternity, each of us
according to his or her own calling.*

COMMUNITIES ALIVE!

The second call of the Chapter challenges us to form life-giving communities so that the warmth of our brotherhood and our simple approach to living the gospel are the first proclamation of our mission.

The wisdom of the Spirit working among the capitulants has linked this second call with the first in which we centre our lives in Christ, that spark igniting the continual, daily work of God in our hearts—for others.

These calls, inextricably linked, are a wonderful grace. We cannot renew our communities without also stirring our hearts to renewed trust in the Risen Lord among us. While Provinces must take up the challenge of creating new forms of life and new communities that are life giving, this call is no less made to us all in whichever community we find ourselves.

There is a story about a community of old monks, lost in their spiritual journey. The abbot goes into the woods nearby and finds a holy rabbi who, in a spirit of brotherhood crossing boundaries, tells the abbot, ‘The Messiah is among you.’ The abbot takes the message to his community and, little by little change begins, along with a surge of interest from young people wanting to join them. It is all in the manner of their relationships with one another. The Constitutions speak of the superior representing Jesus Christ. But this needs to be said of each member of the community, that he is Christ. When we see one another ‘in Christ’ our communities will indeed be a light for all to see by.

Br. Barry Burns
Provincial of New Zealand

BUILDING COMMUNITY: A CHALLENGE FOR EVERYONE

Is it enough to live under the same roof? No. We should revitalize our communities: communities of Brothers, families, schools. This is the call that the God of Life is sending our way. It’s not enough for us to work together, live together, pray together. Today it is necessary to live brotherhood and witness to the fact that we are children of the same Father, and brothers and sisters, one for another. Today it is necessary to live a simple lifestyle, modeling a new world in prophetic ways. Today it is necessary to live the Gospel, as the joyful proclamation of the Kingdom of God that it is, right here in our midst.

Our world needs people who give witness to life. Communities that are alternatives to the individualism and selfishness that hold sway today. Children and young people are not waiting for us to utter nice words about love, respect, forgiveness, joy, work. What they expect is life shared with enthusiasm. A witnessing to communion, where diversity is respected, each individual can be his or her own person, joys and sorrows are shared, everyone has a stake in our dreams, and God is recognized and loved in every boy and girl.

Building community is a challenge for everyone. We cannot stay on the sidelines and watch. Everyone needs to contribute in order to bring about the community that we are envisioning. It is up to us to make the first move. Be stouthearted. The Spirit of Jesus is with us on our way.

Ricardo Miño
District Delegate for Mission
Santa Cruz - Bolivia

TO LIVE IN HARMONY! •

F COMMUNITIES

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

- 1.- As Brothers and Lay People, how can we witness to our fraternal bonds in our ministries and schools?
- 2.- Would it be possible and beneficial in your area to form a community composed of Brothers and Lay People, like the one Catherine Demougin writes about in her article?

TWO BROTHERS, A MARRIED COUPLE, THEIR SON,
AND YOUNG PEOPLE!
HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO LIVE TOGETHER!

For the past six years now, we Brothers and Lay Marists have been living under the same roof in service to young people. We have had to overcome several rough spots to find true harmony, the joy of living together.

More often than not the customs of a married couple and those of two celibates were in conflict rather than in harmony, and for the first few years, everything wasn't all wine and roses!

Having endured together **this experience of our poverty**, we learned how to set aside our differences in the interests of **our common mission**. We came from very different backgrounds: teacher, educator, catechist, and youth group moderator, and we learned how to work together in carrying out all our activities. We lift each other's spirits. How liberating that is! I can rely on the support of the whole community if I'm not having a good day, if a young person isn't doing well or is causing problems in the group. We take a lot of time **to review** what we observe with the young people, and that allows us to see things from a similar point of view.

Evenings, if no meetings are scheduled, we take time to **play together**. Every year we go on **vacation as a community**, a time for rest, discovery, and leisure.

Extended times together before God, a mission lived in common, and times for relaxing together have created a real joie de vivre in our community!

Catherine Demougin
The La Valla Community,
Mulhouse, France

NEWTIMES

Only three years went by between the publication of "In the footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat" and the texts of the last General Chapter, and I have a feeling that to some extent their contents have been overtaken by events. I'm happy if that's the case, above all because once more people's lives have gone beyond their words and hopes. In this short period of time, we Brothers and Laity have entered **together** into personal processes of reflexion, allowing us to better understand our uniqueness, individuality, and identity. We have accomplished this side by side, participating in joint experiences of solidarity, visiting the Hermitage, walking up to La Valla, and kneeling down at the feet of the "dark-skinned Virgin" at Fourvière. As Brothers and Lay People we have benefited greatly from sharing our concerns, plans, and expectations, from enjoying meals and celebrations together, praying and sharing personal experiences, even seeing Fraternities as a means for making it easier to carry out our common mission of bringing the Good News to the most vulnerable children and young people. This has simplified and facilitated our everyday work and our taking on and sharing responsibilities at the highest level. These are new times, demanding new ways of doing things. What was done in the past no longer serves the needs of the children and teenagers of today.

Carlos Robla Pérez
Marist Province of León
"Auseva" Marist High School
Oviedo, Spain

The choice to live as lay Marists



The Marist Fraternity in Orlu, Nigeria, with Brother John Metuh

THE CHAMPAGNAT MOVEMENT, AN ANSWER

“For us Brothers let it be a blessing and a joy to see that the Founder’s charism is developing in the hearts of people and causing new sources of life to spring up. It is a blessing and a joy for us, Brothers and lay people, to feel ourselves called to share our common richness and to live together an exciting spiritual and apostolic adventure. It is a blessing and a joy, especially for you young people, the future of society and of the Church, to be able to find in the Champagnat Movement an answer to your deepest expectations and a field of action for your generosity.” (Br. Charles Howard’s Circular, *The Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family*, 15 October 1991, page 400).

A BIT OF HISTORY

In 1985, the Brothers’ 18th General Chapter, knowing that many men and women wanted to par-

ticipate in the spirituality and mission of Marcellin, launched the Champagnat Movement. Two years later, “The vocation and mission of the laity” was celebrated at the Synod of Bishops, followed by an Apostolic Exhortation from John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*. The words of Paul VI were being turned into deeds: “This is the time of the laity.” In 1991, Brother Charles Howard, then Superior General, wrote a Circular on the Champagnat Movement that included a *Plan of life*, the result of three years of work, intended for all who desire to be members of a Marist Fraternity.

THE PLAN OF LIFE

This is a brief text with 25 points, grouped into four chapters: 1) identity of the Champagnat Movement; 2) its spirituality; 3) its family spirit; 4) mission; and 5) organization.

Some statements: “By sharing the spiritual heritage of Marcellin

Champagnat, members of the movement fulfill their vocation and mission, in the family of Mary, their special Mother and Model.” (Paragraph 25); “Like Marcellin Champagnat’s own lifelong spirituality, the Movement’s spirituality is rooted in God’s love for all men and women. And it grows and gains strength from the members’ gift of themselves to others. It is also Marial as well as apostolic, just as Father Champagnat summed it up in his motto: *All to Jesus through Mary*. (7); “In their trade and professional work, and their other social and secular activities, members of the Movement also follow Champagnat’s spirit by doing everything with honesty and solidarity, a spirit of service, and with courage born of faith. They try to live the Gospel values of Jesus within the framework of the cultural, social and political realities of their locality.” (18).

LIFE IN A FRATERNITY

The basic unit of the Movement is the Fraternity, formed by lay people who feel called to follow Jesus more closely in accordance with the spirituality of St. Marcellin. A Provincial or District Superior approves the guidelines for forming these fraternities. People wanting to join the Movement request membership in a particular fraternity, and after a time of preparation, they are accepted as full-fledged members. As lay Christians they are called to carry out their mission among those with



BASILIO RUEDA, ON THE WAY TO SAINTHOOD

On June 5th, at its evening prayer vigil for the feast of our Founder, the General Council decided to open the cause of canonization of Brother Basilio Rueda, our Superior General from 1967 to 1985. All his life Basilio, from Mexico (1924-1996), was a man who belonged to the whole world. As our Superior General during a stormy time for the Church, he would become a prophet and artisan of the religious life following Vatican II. He embodied the genius of friendship, attentiveness to people, a big heart, a keen and tireless mind, optimism, and humor, and was probably one of the ablest, most trustworthy of spiritual masters. With us he experienced the passion and turmoil of our world in joyous intimacy with God. He assures us that loving Christ today holds out sensational possibilities.

whom they live and work. Their apostolate is an integral part of the Church's mission. The family is the first field of the apostolate and it gives life to Gospel values in the context of its country's cultural, social, and political realities. Fraternities give priority to Christian formation, justice, and especially the needs of the young, the poor, and the abandoned. There are about 200 Marist Fraternities in some 40 countries on five continents, with about 3000 members. St. Marcellin's canonization, making him renowned throughout the Universal Church, has led to a marked increase in the number of new fraternities.

NEWS FROM FRATERNITIES

BELGIAN FRATERNITIES COME TOGETHER

Saturday, March 2nd, some twenty people gathered at the house in Habay-la-Vieille for a meeting of the Belgian Fraternities. More than twenty people, Brothers and laity, responded to the invitation. After an introductory prayer, the morning was devoted to sharing what different local groups were experiencing and also to taking a look at the future. After an enjoyable lunch, we watched a video with testimonials from Brothers and Lay People belonging to Fraternities. Then a member of the gathering spoke about an aspect of Father Cham-

pagnat's life, based on an article by Brother Alain Delorme, "Marcellin Champagnat, a well-connected man."

After that, a pleasant surprise – it was the birthday of little Gabriel and of Chantale – we set out for Arlon where we were joined by some people from the school and the town. By means of a video, photos, an exhibit... we explained the work that's been done up until now with the young people and different fraternities.

A supper sponsored by the Champagnat Solidarity Fund brought the day to a close. All the fraternity members then returned to Habay-la-Vieille to continue their meetings until the following afternoon.

MARIST FRATERNITIES IN NIGERIA

Beginning in 1996, Brother John Metuh helped start a Marist Fraternity in Orlu, Nigeria. When he moved to Azaraegbelu in 2001, another fraternity sprang up, with 18 members. Six more people joined last July. These two enthusiastic groups clearly evidence the vitality of St. Marcellin's charism in Nigeria today.

A NEW FRATERNITY IN SPAIN

In Murcia, Province of Levante, Spain, a third Fraternity met for the first time on June 6th, Feast of St. Marcellin. Most of its members are teachers and married couples. ♦



Meeting of the Belgian Fraternidades in Habay-la-Vieille



Paul Cummings
Participant
in the 20th
General Chapter
Kinharvie,
Scotland

CHAPTER REFLECTIONS. EXCERPTS.

The Chapter experience left me with many thoughts, feelings, ideas and conclusions. I would like to share some of these with you. They concern:

Marist Charism and Lay Identity

- I believe that the Identity of the Lay Marist and the Marist Charism are gifts to be claimed by each of us. They are not the preserve of Brothers or given to us by Brothers.

Co-responsibility - *The current language of association often describes lay people as associates of the Brothers. Can we move to a language of co-association, leading to structures of collaboration in mission including leadership and the encouragement of Lay Marist initiatives?*

Solidarity - *Attention to the poor of the world is vital. Are we living in healing communities where intimate and meaningful conversations prepare us for greater solidarity with each other and the wider community?*

True Discernment - *At each stage of the process (see, judge, act), consensus was sought from the capitulants. I found myself constantly struggling with the concept of consensus, which I believe can compromise the quality of discernment. The prophetic is harder to find in group consensus!*

Inspiration - *I was inspired at how truly international the congregation is. I felt not only a part of the Marist family but a citizen of the world.*

Champagnat, a man filled with passion for Christ, Mary, and the Kingdom

Br. Rodrigo Cuesta Guerra
Escuela Marista de Guatemala - Province de Central America

I often take delight in contemplating MARCELLIN as a PASSIONATE man. When we read his life, how else can we possibly look upon him? He was passionate in EVERYTHING he did. There was nothing of laziness, carelessness, mediocrity, sloppiness, standoffishness, or selfishness – no ifs, or buts about the man in anything he did or in any of his attitudes.... Quite the contrary. He was a passionate soul through and through, from his birth to his death, consumed by passion at the age of 51... which is to say, “before his time.” The dictionary defines passion as that VERY LIVELY predilection or preference for someone or something. Being passionate means being ENTHUSIASTIC about someone or something, easily prone to excitement and emotion. BEING IN LOVE with someone. Becoming stirred up about an idea or object.

Passion is that something that imbues your entire personality with a power making all your energy, strength, feelings – your whole being – focused on the person who has captivated your heart. You reach a point of surrender, of unconditional commitment, of a free and total gift of self.

And it seems to me that we are letting that power of PASSION slip away from us. Wrapped up in “a million and one things to do,” we may be losing sight of the profound REASON for doing them and doing them with a passion, with love. “St. Thomas says that ‘ZEAL is proportionate to the the LOVE of God in a soul.’ This love must have been phenomenal in Father Champagnat for it led him to undertake and follow up on so many important enterprises”. (Br. Amphien)

When he prayed, worked, taught catechism, trained the Brothers, traveled, visited schools, was among children and young people, with the Brothers in the community at La Valla or the Hermitage..., his whole being expressed a PASSIONATE LOVE for Jesus and Mary, the Brothers, children, the poor...

At the 20th General Chapter, after discussing the word “passionately,” we put in writing something that

our Father Champagnat had already exemplified for us in an extraordinary way: **To center our lives and communities in Jesus Christ, like Mary, with passion and enthusiasm.**

“Burning ZEAL for the glory of God and the salvation of souls” is one of the pillars of Marist spirituality, together with “Wholehearted love for Jesus”. Both speak to us clearly about BEING PASSIONATE for God, for Jesus Christ. From the very beginning that was one of the characteristics that people who testified about Champagnat referred to over and over again: his passion, his enthusiasm, his “UNSTINTING LOVE,” so warm and vibrant.

“I cannot meet children without wanting to teach them about God, tell them how much Jesus loves them, and how much they should love Him, our Divine Savior, in return.”

Brothers, Lay People, Fraternities... What is the motivation behind everything we are doing as MARISTS?

I would hope with all my heart that it's similar to what motivated Champagnat: zeal for the glory of God and a passionate love for Jesus and Mary! ♦



Young people surrounding the statue of St. Marcellin at the Santa María de Bellpuig retreat center in Les Avellanes, Spain

RESTRUCTURING

The Marist Institute is undergoing a thorough restructuring process in which new Administrative Units are being formed throughout the Marist world. This task stems from the reality of Marcellin Champagnat's charism, is based on the principle of solidarity, and is meant to generate greater vitality. It was a task put forward by the 19th General Chapter. Its spirit was captured in the motto used for the canonization: “a heart that knows no bounds.” Often the new Provinces are multicultural, multilingual, and cover a wider geographical area. In April 1999, the first step was taken: the Southern Africa Province came into being, which now includes Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In April 2000, the West-Central Europe Province was formed, bringing together Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Holland and Ireland. Since that time new Units have been created: Canada, taking in Canada and Haiti; Rio Grande do Sul, joining Porto Alegre, Santa Maria and the District of Amazonia; Santa María de los Andes, uniting Bolivia, Chile and Peru; and Brasil Centro Sul, bringing together São Paulo and Santa Caterina. More new Units are scheduled to be created in 2003, from existing Provinces now involved in advanced stages of planning. At the same time, other regions are entering into preliminary discussions. The 20th General Chapter has fully endorsed this process and encouraged everyone to see it through to completion. Legal aspects aside, we need to face the future with new formulas, wider horizons, and more creative responses.